

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: March 10, 2016

Agenda Item: Peregrine Falcon Falconry Take

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed for Presentation: 15 Min

Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisted peregrine falcons in 1999 when there were less than 30 known occupied territories in Montana. Monitoring since that time has shown steady increases in the number of nesting pairs and the production of young, primarily in western Montana. In 2015 the Montana Peregrine Institute reported 129 active territories, the highest number reported since surveys began in 1994 and the highest reproductive rate recorded since 1994 of 2.4 young/active territory.

The take proposed here is based on the 2012 productivity estimate of 203 young fledged and the agreed to take of no more than 5 percent of annual productivity described in FWP's 2007 Final Environmental Assessment.

From 2008 through 2011 a total of 42 falconers applied for 18 permits and five birds were taken. In the 2012-13 and 2014-15 biennium, take operated under a 10-bird quota for resident falconers, with one permit for nonresident falconers. Seven birds were taken including the allowed nonresident take in the 2012-13 biennium and three residents took birds during the 2014-15 biennium.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP received 64 comments; 33 from Montana residents and 31 from non-residents. Sixty comments were generally in favor for the proposed peregrine take including many that suggested FWP increase allowable take and/or lengthen the season of take. Two comments were vehemently opposed to falconry take of any kind.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Based on findings in FWP's 2007 Final Environmental Assessment and the history of peregrine take in Montana FWP proposes that the Commission:

- authorize resident take of 10 nestling or fledged peregrines through a quota system during the 2016-17 biennium.
- authorize non-resident take of one nestling or fledged peregrine through a 2016-17 permit.
- restrict take to June 1-Aug. 31.
- limit take to one peregrine per year per falconer.
- impose a two-year waiting period for any falconer successful in taking a peregrine.
- allow only general or master falconers to take peregrines.
- prohibit take from eastern Montana to encourage expansion of the breeding population.
- prohibit take from certain nests of high value wildlife viewing opportunity and/or part of on-going agency approved research efforts (current list of closed-to-take nests = 8).
- prohibit the sale, barter or exchange of birds from the wild.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Commission approve FWP's recommendation to authorize the take of up to 10 peregrine falcons for falconry purposes by residents and one peregrine falcon for falconry purposes by nonresidents during the 2016-17 take period.